

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 04919 191610Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
ICAE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 SY-05
A-01 OPR-02 OC-06 CCO-00 /081 W
-----082159 191620Z /42

O 191435Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7983
INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN
AMCONSUL KADUNA IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PDEV) 08,5, NI
SUBJECT: OBASANJO ADDRESSES CA

REF: LAGOS 4905

1. SUMMARY: OBASANJO REPORTEDLY MADE PUBLIC
APPEAL TO CONSTITUTENT ASSEMBLY (CA) MEMBERS
APRIL 18 TO ACT AS STATESMEN RATHER THAN
POLITICIANS AND URGED NORTHERN MEMBERS TO RETURN
TO CA WHEN IT RECONVENES MONDAY APRIL 24.
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE YSUF REPORTEDLY
MADE STRONGER APPEAL IN PRIVATE SESSION WITH CA
MEMBKDS APRIL 17 WARNING THAT THEIR ACTIONS WERE
THREATENING "PEACE AND ORDER" IN NIGERIA.
SOTHERN CA MEMBERS FELT THAT OBASANJO'S ADDRESS
PROVIDED EXCUSE FOR NORTHERN MEMBERS TO RETURN,
BUT IGNORED FACT THAT SHARIA ISSUE WOULD CONTINUE
AS SOURCE OF PROBLEMS FOR CA. ENS SUMMARY.

2. GENERAL OBASANJO'S APRIL 18 ADDRESS TO CA
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PAGE 02 LAGOS 04919 191610Z

WAS HASTILY ARRANGED AND SHORT. ACCORDING TO
CA MEMBERS WITH WHOM EMBOFFS MET IMMEDIATELY
FOLLOWING ADDRESS, OBASANJO HAD CALLED ALL
MEMBERS OF SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL (SMC) TO
LAGOS AND FOLLOWING 8:00 A.M. MEETING WITH SMC
TO APPROVE SPEECH CAME TO SPECIAL SESSION WITH
ALL MEMBERS OF SMC TO MAKE APPEAL FOR UNITY.

ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN TEXT AND EMBOFF ARRIVED TOO LATE TO HEAR ADDRESS WE UNDERSTAND THAT OBASANJO APPEALED TO CA MEMBERS TO ACT AS STATESMEN RATHER THAN POLITICIANS AND CALLED UPON ALL MEMBERS TO RETURN WHEN CA RECONVENES MONDAY, APRIL 24. HE REPORTEDLY MADE APPEAL ON BEHALF OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE SMC.

3. INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE, M. D. YUSUF, HAD MET SEPARATELY WITH NORTHERN MEMBERS WHO HAD WALKED OUT, AND REST OF CA, .PREVIOUS DAY. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO INFORMATION AS TO WHAT HE SAID TO NORTHERN MEMBERS, ACCOR(ING TO SOUTHERN CA MEMBERS HE ASKED AS THE HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION RESPONSIBLE FOR 'PEACE AND ORDER' IN NIGERIA THAT MEMBERS REQUEST BOYCOTTING MEMBERS TO RETURN AND CONTINUE WITH THE BUSINESS OF THE ASSEMBLY. HE WARNED THAT THE CURRENT SITUATION THREATENED 'PEACE AND ORDER' IN THE NATION. IN THIS CONNECTION, SOUTHERN MEMBERS CLAIMED THAT LARGE DEMONSTRATIONS HAD BEEN PLANNED IN NORTHERN NIGERIA THIS COMING FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AND THAT ATTEMPTS WERE BEING MADE TO BRING NORTHERN EMIRS TOGETHER TO SUPPORT STRONG DEMANDS FOR CHANGING THE SHARIA PROVISIONS AS APPROVED BY THE ASSEMBLY. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LAGOS 04919 191610Z

4. EMBOFF TALKED WITH A NUMBER MIDDLE BELT MEMBERS (BENUE AND PLATEAU STATES) WHO WERE QUITE NONCHALANT ABOUT NORTHERN WALKOUT AND CURRENT SITUATION. THEY CLEARLY BELIEVED NORTHERNERS HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RETURN AND DID NOT PLACE MUCH WEIGHT ON OBASANJO'S SPEECH--SIMPLY NOTING IT WAS A GOOD ONE.

5. SOUTHERNERS COMMENTED ON 'STATESMANLIKE' QUALITY OF ADDRESS. THEY ALSO CLAIMED THAT MANY INDIVIDUAL NORTHERN MEMBERS WANTED TO RETURN TO CA, BUT WERE UNABLE TO DO SO BECAUSE OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION. SOUTHERN MEMBERS WERE ALSO RELIEVED AT TONE OF OBASANJO'S ADDRESS AND FELT THAT IT PROVIDED EXCUSE FOR NORTHERN MEMBERS TO RETURN. (FYI. RUMORS HAD APPARENTLY SPREAD IN SATELLITE VILLAGE WHERE MOST CA MEMBERS RESIDE THAT OBASANJO WOULD DISSOLVE CA. END FYI)

6. ALTHOUGH ALL NORTHERN MEMBERS HAD REPORTEDLY ATTENDED SPECIAL SESSION, THEY WERE UNAVAILABLE SINCE THEY CAUCUSED

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MEETING TO DISCUSS NEXT MOVE.

7. COMMENT: WE HAVE LITTLE FEEL FOR SITUATION BEYOND LAGOS AREA AND CANNOT COMMENT ON EITHER YUSUF'S CONCERN FOR 'PEACE AND ORDER' OR ALLEGED DEMONSTRATIONS PLANNED FOR NORTH. WE NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT TODAY'S PUNCH REPORTED STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF NSUKKA INTERRUPTED AND WALKED OUT ON SPEECH BY NORTHERN CA LEADER ALHAJI AMINU KANO SUNDAY, APRIL 16. REPORTEDLY MIDWAY IN HIS SPEECH, STUDENT WALKED TO STAGE, PRESENTED KANO WITH LETTER CONDEMNING BOYCOTT AND GROUP OF 60 STUDENTS WALKED OUT CARRYING PLACARDS READING, 'AMINU KANO, SHARIA OR ONE NIGERIA?' AND 'THE NATION CAN NOT BE HELD TO RANSOM.' STUDENT LETTER REPORTEDLY SAID KANO'S LEADERSHIP OF CA WALKOUT SHOWS HE IS AN 'ANARCHIST AND ACTING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 LAGOS 04919 191610Z

NATIONALIST, A NON-DEMOCRAT, A NON-BELIEVER IN NIGERIAN FEDERALISM AND AN ETHNIC CHAUVINIST. YOU SHOULD NO LONGER ASPIRE (TO) THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THIS COUNTRY, AS THANKS TO ALLAH, NIGERIANS CAN NO LONGER UTE DECEIVED.'

8. OBASANJO'S APPEAL MAY WELL PROVIDE EXCUSE FOR NORTHERN RETURN TO CA. AT SAME TIME IT DOES NOT RESOLVE SHARIA ISSUE. NORTHERNERS HAVE REMAINED ADAMANT ON THE ISSUE AND SOUTHERNERS CONTINUE TO VIEW THE MATTER AS SETTLED.
WYMAN

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